



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

KNOWING JESUS

The Ascension and Return of Jesus

Where Jesus Is Now, Why He Will Return, and How We Should Live While We Wait

The short answer

After rising from the dead, Jesus appeared to His followers for forty days. He then ascended bodily into heaven, where He now reigns as Lord, represents His people before the Father, and directs His church through the Holy Spirit. Jesus will return personally, visibly, bodily, and gloriously to complete God's redemptive plan.

“This Jesus...will come back in the same way as you saw him going into the sky.”

Acts 1:11 WEB

Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

PART ONE · BEGINNER GUIDE

Jesus rose, reigns, and will return

This Companion was not written to replace your Bible. It was written to help you understand and love it. Every section is intended to send you back into God's Word with greater confidence and a clearer picture of Jesus Christ.

The story of Jesus did not end when He rose from the dead. He spent forty days appearing to His disciples and teaching about God's kingdom. He then ascended into heaven. His ascension was not His retirement from the story.

How to use this guide

Begin by reading Acts 1:1–11. Notice what Jesus taught, the mission He gave, the promise He made about the Holy Spirit, and what the angels said about His return. Part One explains the central truths plainly. Part Two explores them more deeply.

What you will learn

01

What happened after Jesus rose

Follow Jesus through His forty days of appearances and teaching.

02

What the ascension means

Understand why Jesus' return to heaven belongs to His saving mission.

03

What Jesus is doing now

See how Jesus reigns, intercedes, and leads His church.

04

What will happen when Jesus returns

Explore resurrection, judgment, victory, and new creation.

Beginner memory anchor

Jesus rose. Jesus reigns. Jesus will return.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

AFTER THE RESURRECTION

Jesus spent forty days with His followers

After Jesus rose from the dead, He did not immediately ascend. He appeared to His followers over forty days and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive (Acts 1:1–3).

- He appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11–18).
- He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35).
- He appeared to disciples in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36–49).
- He invited Thomas to see and touch His wounds (John 20:24–29).
- He met disciples beside the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1–23).
- He appeared to more than five hundred people at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).
- He appeared to James and later to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:7–8).

The disciples did not merely feel that Jesus remained with them spiritually. They saw Him, spoke with Him, touched Him, ate with Him, and received instruction from Him.

Beginner truth

The resurrection appearances prepared the disciples to become witnesses of what they had personally seen and heard.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The victory has begun

During those forty days, Jesus continued teaching about the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is His righteous rule. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated sin and death and was revealed as the promised King.

The kingdom had truly arrived through Jesus, but its fullness was still ahead.

- Jesus has already won the decisive victory.
- Sin, suffering, rebellion, and death have not yet been completely removed.
- Jesus already reigns, though the world does not yet fully recognize His reign.
- Believers already receive eternal life, but still await bodily resurrection and renewed creation.

The “already and not yet”

Christians use this phrase to describe promises that have genuinely begun but are not yet complete. Jesus has already been raised. His resurrection guarantees the future resurrection of His people, but believers who die still await that promise.

A simple example

The decisive victory has been won, but its complete results are still coming.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE CHURCH'S MISSION

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit

Jesus told His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. They could not fulfill His mission through determination, education, organization, or human courage alone. They needed God's presence and power (Acts 1:4–8).

What the Holy Spirit would do

- Remind the disciples of Jesus' teaching (John 14:26).
- Guide them into truth and glorify Jesus (John 16:13–14).
- Give them power to be witnesses (Acts 1:8).
- Unite believers into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- Live within and transform God's people (Romans 8:9–14; Galatians 5:22–25).

The Great Commission and Acts 1:8

Matthew 28:18–20 gives the church its mission: make disciples of all nations, baptize them, and teach them to obey Jesus. Acts 1:8 explains how that mission would be carried out: the Holy Spirit would empower Jesus' followers to bear witness from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

Mission, power, and message

The mission comes from Jesus, the power comes from the Holy Spirit, and the message centers on the crucified and risen Lord.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE ASCENSION

Jesus returned to heavenly glory

Read Acts 1:9–11 and Luke 24:50–53.

After speaking to His disciples, Jesus was lifted up before their eyes, and a cloud received Him from their sight.

01

Personal

The same Jesus who had lived, died, and risen ascended into heaven.

02

Bodily

Jesus did not abandon His humanity. The risen Jesus ascended bodily.

03

Visible

The disciples watched Him go. The ascension occurred in their presence.

04

Purposeful

Jesus returned to the Father and continued His work from heavenly authority.

05

Glorious

The cloud recalled the divine glory and presence displayed throughout Scripture.

Beginner truth

Jesus' ascension does not mean He stopped working. He now carries out His work from the place of heavenly authority.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

WHY THE ASCENSION MATTERS

Jesus' work continues

Jesus returned to the Father

He completed the saving work given to Him and returned to the glory He shared with the Father (John 16:28; 17:4–5).

Jesus was exalted as Lord and King

God exalted Him above every name. One day every knee will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:8–11).

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit

His departure led to the Spirit's coming in new-covenant fullness (John 16:7; Acts 2:32–33).

Jesus represents His people

He is the great High Priest who lives forever and intercedes for those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 4:14–16; 7:23–25).

Jesus prepares a place

He promised to prepare a place for His followers and return for them (John 14:1–3).

Jesus directs His church

From heaven, Jesus gives gifts, equips His people, and leads the church's mission (Ephesians 1:20–23; 4:7–13).



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

WHERE JESUS IS NOW

Seated at God's right hand

The New Testament frequently says Jesus is seated at God's right hand. This is royal language describing honor, authority, victory, and shared rule—not an inactive Jesus sitting in a chair.

- He reigns as Lord and King (Acts 2:32–36).
- He exercises authority over heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18).
- He intercedes for believers (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).
- He serves as our High Priest and Advocate (Hebrews 4:14–16; 1 John 2:1–2).
- He builds and leads His church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:7–13).
- He waits until every enemy is finally defeated (1 Corinthians 15:24–28).

Jesus intercedes for His people

Jesus represents believers on the basis of His completed sacrifice. His intercession does not mean the Father is reluctant to love us. Father and Son are perfectly united in saving God's people.

Why this matters

When believers fail, struggle, suffer, or feel unworthy, they do not have to wonder whether Jesus has forgotten them. His sacrifice is sufficient, and He faithfully represents everyone who belongs to Him.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE PROMISED RETURN

The same Jesus will come back

The angels told the disciples that the same Jesus who ascended would return in the same way. The New Testament consistently teaches that Jesus will return (Acts 1:11).

01

Personal

Jesus Himself will return—not merely His principles or influence.

02

Visible

His return will not be a private spiritual event recognized by only a few (Matthew 24:27, 30).

03

Bodily

The same risen Jesus who ascended will return.

04

Glorious

Jesus first came in humility; He will return openly as the glorious King (Matthew 25:31).

05

Powerful

He will defeat evil and judge with perfect justice (2 Thessalonians 1:6–10).

06

Certain

His return is not a possibility. It is a promise.

Beginner memory anchor

The same Jesus who ascended will personally and gloriously return.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

The promises Christians share

Christians disagree about the exact order of some future events, but Scripture clearly teaches these central truths.

Jesus will be revealed as King

Every person will recognize His authority (Philippians 2:9–11; Revelation 1:7).

The dead will be raised

Those who belong to Him will receive transformed, imperishable bodies (John 5:28–29; 1 Corinthians 15:50–57).

Living believers will be gathered to Him

Living and resurrected believers will be united with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

Evil will be judged

No hidden wrong will remain hidden, and no injustice will remain unanswered (Acts 17:30–31; Revelation 20:11–15).

Every enemy will be defeated

Satan, sin, and death will finally fall under Christ's authority (1 Corinthians 15:24–28; Revelation 20:10, 14).



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

God will renew creation

The Christian hope is not merely escaping earth and living forever as disembodied spirits. Scripture looks toward bodily resurrection and a renewed creation in which God dwells with His people (Romans 8:18–25; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21–22).

The promise begins in the Old Testament

Through Isaiah, God promised “new heavens and a new earth” marked by joy, peace, worship, and enduring life before Him (Isaiah 65:17–25; 66:22–23). The Bible’s final vision does not abandon these earlier promises. It brings them to completion through Jesus.

God’s people will be with Him forever

There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. God’s people will see His face, worship Him, serve Him, and reign with Him (Revelation 21:3–5; 22:3–5).

The Christian hope

Jesus will not abandon creation to sin, injustice, suffering, and death. He will return and make all things right.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

FAITHFUL WAITING

Ready does not mean frightened

Jesus said no one knows the day or hour of His return (Matthew 24:36). Claims that someone has calculated the exact day or year should not be trusted. The proper response is faithful readiness—not careless speculation.

A necessary guardrail

Jesus told His disciples to be witnesses—not date-setters.

Biblical readiness includes

01	Faith Trust Jesus as Savior and Lord.
02	Faithfulness Continue doing the work He has given you (Matthew 24:45–47).
03	Holiness Turn from sin and live in a way that honors God (Titus 2:11–14).
04	Love Love God, serve others, forgive, and care for people in need.
05	Mission Help make disciples and bear witness to Jesus among the nations.
06	Hope and patience Wait without despair, trusting God’s wisdom and timing.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

COMMON BEGINNER QUESTIONS

Keep the clearest truths central

Did Jesus disappear?

Acts describes Jesus entering the unseen heavenly realm. He did not cease to exist; He remains bodily alive and present with the Father.

How can Jesus be with us if He is in heaven?

Jesus is bodily present in heaven and is also with His people through the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:20; John 14:16–18).

Is Jesus sitting and doing nothing?

No. Being seated represents completed sacrifice, victory, and royal authority. Jesus reigns, intercedes, and leads His church.

Will Jesus secretly return?

Christians differ about whether the gathering of believers precedes a later public appearing. All should keep the clearest promise central: Jesus will gather His people and return personally, visibly, bodily, and gloriously.

Should Christians be afraid?

Those who reject Jesus should take coming judgment seriously. For those who belong to Christ, His return is a blessed hope (Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28).



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

PART ONE REVIEW

The essentials to remember

- Jesus rose bodily from the dead.
- He appeared to His followers for forty days.
- He commissioned them to be His witnesses.
- He promised and sent the Holy Spirit.
- He ascended bodily into heaven.
- He now reigns as Lord and King.
- He intercedes for His people.
- He will personally, visibly, bodily, and gloriously return.
- He will raise the dead and judge with perfect justice.
- He will finally defeat sin, Satan, suffering, and death.
- He will renew creation and dwell with His people forever.
- No one knows the date of His return.
- Believers wait through faith, holiness, hope, love, mission, and faithful service.

Beginner summary

Jesus rose. Jesus reigns. Jesus will return. Until He comes, His people live by the Spirit and bear witness to Him.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

PART TWO · WANT TO GO DEEPER?

The Old Testament prepared the way

Psalm 110:1

Psalm 110 presents David's Lord seated at God's right hand and sharing in divine rule. Jesus applied the passage to Himself, and Peter used it to explain that the risen Jesus had been exalted as Lord and Messiah (Matthew 22:41–46; Acts 2:32–36).

Daniel 7:13–14

Daniel saw one like a son of man coming with heaven's clouds to the Ancient of Days and receiving an everlasting kingdom. This movement toward God's throne helps illuminate Jesus' ascension, authority, and future appearing.

Why did a cloud receive Jesus?

Clouds accompany God's presence throughout Scripture: the exodus, tabernacle, transfiguration, Daniel's vision, and Jesus' promised return (Exodus 13:21–22; 40:34–38; Matthew 17:5; 24:30). Acts 1 portrays entrance into heavenly glory.

Ascension memory anchor

Jesus ascended to the Father, received the kingdom, and reigns at God's right hand.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE REIGNING JESUS

Seated—but also standing

Most passages describe Jesus seated at God's right hand, emphasizing completed sacrifice and royal authority. Acts 7:55–56, however, shows Stephen seeing Jesus standing before Stephen's death.

Christians suggest that Jesus stands to welcome Stephen, serve as his Advocate, honor His faithful servant, or demonstrate active presence. The text does not explain the posture, so we should not claim more certainty than Scripture provides.

Comfort for suffering believers

The persecuted Stephen was not abandoned. Jesus saw and received him. Earthly authorities may reject or harm Christ's witnesses, but they cannot remove them from His care. No faithful suffering is unseen, and no believer dies unnoticed or alone.

The distinct but united work of the Trinity

The Father exalted the Son; the Son completed His mission, ascended, reigns, intercedes, and will return; the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, empowers the church, and applies Christ's saving work (Ephesians 1:20–23; Acts 2:32–33; Romans 8:9–17).

These distinct roles do not mean unequal divine value or conflicting plans. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God acting in perfect unity.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

HEAVENLY MINISTRY

Jesus' sacrifice is finished

Hebrews connects Jesus' ascension with His ministry as our great High Priest. Jesus is sinless, offered Himself once for all, entered the true heavenly sanctuary, lives forever, and intercedes without failure (Hebrews 4:14–16; 7:23–28; 9:11–28).

Does Jesus keep sacrificing Himself?

No. His sacrifice was completed once for all. His intercession does not repeat the cross; He represents believers on the basis of the sacrifice already completed.

What is the rapture?

The word comes from a Latin translation of “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Paul says the dead in Christ will rise, living believers will be caught up with them, and all will meet the Lord and be with Him forever.

Three common futurist views

- Pre-tribulation: the church is gathered before a future tribulation.
- Mid-tribulation or pre-wrath: the church experiences part of it but is gathered before final wrath.
- Post-tribulation: the church is gathered as Jesus publicly returns.

A helpful guardrail

The gathering of believers is certain; its precise placement in an end-times timeline is debated. Our confidence rests in Jesus' promise—not an error-free chart.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

What is the millennium?

Revelation 20 describes one thousand years in which Christ reigns and Satan is restrained.

Premillennialism

Jesus returns before the millennium and reigns over a future kingdom.

Amillennialism

The thousand years symbolically describes Christ's present heavenly reign and the church age.

Postmillennialism

The gospel produces a long period of widespread spiritual blessing before Jesus returns.

Keep the shared promises central

Each position tries to understand Revelation 20 within the whole Bible. All affirm that Jesus reigns, Jesus will return, evil will be judged, the dead will be raised, and God will renew creation.

What does it mean to meet the Lord in the air?

The word translated “meet” could describe people welcoming an arriving ruler. Some believe believers rise to welcome Jesus and accompany Him as He comes. Others caution that the word does not settle every detail. Paul’s pastoral point is certain: deceased believers will not miss Christ’s return (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

WATCHING FAITHFULLY

Signs, labor pains, and the Day of the Lord

Scripture associates the end with the gospel reaching nations, false teachers, conflict, persecution, rebellion, a lawless opponent, cosmic disturbances, and Christ's revelation. Christians differ about what has occurred, what repeats, and what awaits final fulfillment.

Labor pains

Jesus' picture of labor pains allows for events that begin, repeat, and intensify. It discourages treating every crisis as proof that a precise countdown has begun while reminding us that history moves toward God's appointed conclusion.

Can Jesus return at any time?

Some emphasize imminence; others emphasize signs that appear to precede His coming; still others distinguish the church's gathering from a later public appearing. Scripture's application remains the same: stay awake, faithful, hopeful, and prepared.

The Day of the Lord

This Old Testament theme can describe historical judgment and also point toward final judgment and restoration. The New Testament connects it with Christ's return, judgment of evil, rescue of God's people, and renewal of creation (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11; 2 Peter 3:8–13).



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE FUTURE OF CREATION

Heaven is not the end of the story

Will the earth be destroyed or renewed?

Second Peter 3 uses language of fire, dissolution, judgment, and a new heavens and earth. Some understand complete replacement; others understand purifying judgment followed by radical renewal. Both affirm that creation will not remain under sin's curse.

Romans 8 describes creation liberated from corruption. Isaiah 65–66 anticipates new heavens and a new earth filled with joy, peace, worship, and God's presence. Revelation 21 describes the holy city coming down from heaven.

The final Christian hope

Believers who die are with Christ while awaiting resurrection (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21–23). The complete hope includes:

- Christ's return.
- Bodily resurrection.
- Final judgment.
- The defeat of death.
- Renewed creation.
- God dwelling with His people forever.

The Bible's complete story

It begins with God and humanity together in a garden and ends with God and redeemed humanity together in renewed creation.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

UNTIL HE COMES

Prophecy should strengthen mission

Acts follows a deliberate movement:

- Jesus rises and teaches His disciples.
- He commands them to make disciples of all nations.
- He ascends as Lord and pours out the Holy Spirit.
- The church bears witness from Jerusalem toward the nations.
- The church awaits Jesus' return.

Matthew 28 gives the assignment; Acts 1:8 gives the promised power and expanding path. Jesus redirected the disciples from mastering the timetable to fulfilling their mission.

A needed correction

Interest in prophecy should strengthen mission—not replace it.

How the ascension shapes prayer

- Approach God's throne with confidence (Hebrews 4:14–16).
- Pray for God's kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10).
- Pray and work for the gospel to reach others (Colossians 4:2–4).
- Pray, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Longing for Christ's return is not an excuse to withdraw from loving neighbors or serving faithfully. Those who long for Him should represent Him well until He comes.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

PRACTICE PAGE

Read Acts 1:1–11

01

What did Jesus do during the forty days?

Look carefully at Acts 1:1–3.

02

What did He tell the disciples to wait for?

Notice why they needed the Holy Spirit.

03

What mission did He give?

Compare Matthew 28:18–20 with Acts 1:8.

04

How is the ascension described?

List what the disciples saw.

05

What promise did the angels give?

Notice “this same Jesus” and “in the same way.”

06

How should this change your life?

Consider why the angels redirected them, then name one response involving faith, mission, worship, hope, holiness, or perseverance.

One possible faithful summary

The risen Jesus ascended bodily and now reigns as Lord. He sent the Spirit to empower His followers to fulfill the Great Commission. The same Jesus will gloriously return, so His people faithfully serve Him while they wait.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

CONTINUE IN SCRIPTURE

Key passages for further study

- Psalm 110
- Isaiah 65:17–25; 66:22–23
- Daniel 7:9–14
- Matthew 24–25; 28:16–20
- Luke 24:36–53
- John 14:1–3
- Acts 1:1–11; 2:22–36; 7:54–60
- Romans 8:18–39
- 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, 50–58
- Ephesians 1:15–23
- Philippians 2:5–11; 3:20–21
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11
- 2 Thessalonians 1–2
- Titus 2:11–14
- Hebrews 4:14–16; 7:23–28; 9:24–28
- 2 Peter 3:1–14
- Revelation 19–22

Review and reflection

- What does the ascension teach you about Jesus' authority?
- How does Jesus' intercession encourage you?
- How do Matthew 28 and Acts 1:8 work together?
- How should Christ's return affect your priorities?
- What work has Jesus placed before you in this season?
- What grief or injustice are you longing for Jesus to make right?
- Can you sincerely pray, "Come, Lord Jesus"?



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

THE MOST IMPORTANT PLACE TO BEGIN

Would you like to begin with Jesus?

Jesus' return is joyful hope for those who belong to Him, but it also reminds us that every person will answer to God. All people have sinned and cannot make themselves right with God through good behavior, religion, or sincere intentions.

Jesus Christ came to save sinners. He lived without sin, died for our sins, was buried, bodily rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and reigns as Lord. He will return.

God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, new life, and eternal hope to everyone who repents and trusts Jesus (John 3:16–18; Romans 10:9–13; Ephesians 2:8–10).

How do we respond?

01

Turn toward God

Repentance means turning from sin and self-rule toward God.

02

Believe in Jesus

Trust that Jesus is Lord and that His death and resurrection are sufficient to save you.

03

Call on Him

Confess your need, receive His grace, and ask Him to forgive and lead you.

A prayer can express your faith

Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and cannot save myself. I believe You died for my sins, rose from the dead, and reign as Lord. Please forgive me, make me new, and teach me to follow You while I wait for Your return. Amen.

A prayer is not a magic formula. Salvation rests in Jesus Christ, not in perfect words. If you have trusted Him, begin reading His Word, pray honestly, tell another faithful Christian, and connect with a Bible-teaching local church.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

CARRY THIS TRUTH WITH YOU

Jesus is reigning—and Jesus is returning

Final memory anchor

Jesus' ascension was not an ending. The risen Jesus reigns as Lord, represents His people before the Father, and directs His church through the Holy Spirit. One day He will personally, visibly, bodily, and gloriously return. Until then, His followers trust Him, become His witnesses, live faithfully, and wait with hope.

This content is made to be used and shared

You may freely print, copy, and share this resource to encourage others to open their Bibles. Please preserve source acknowledgments, do not sell it, and do not present it as error-free.

Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus